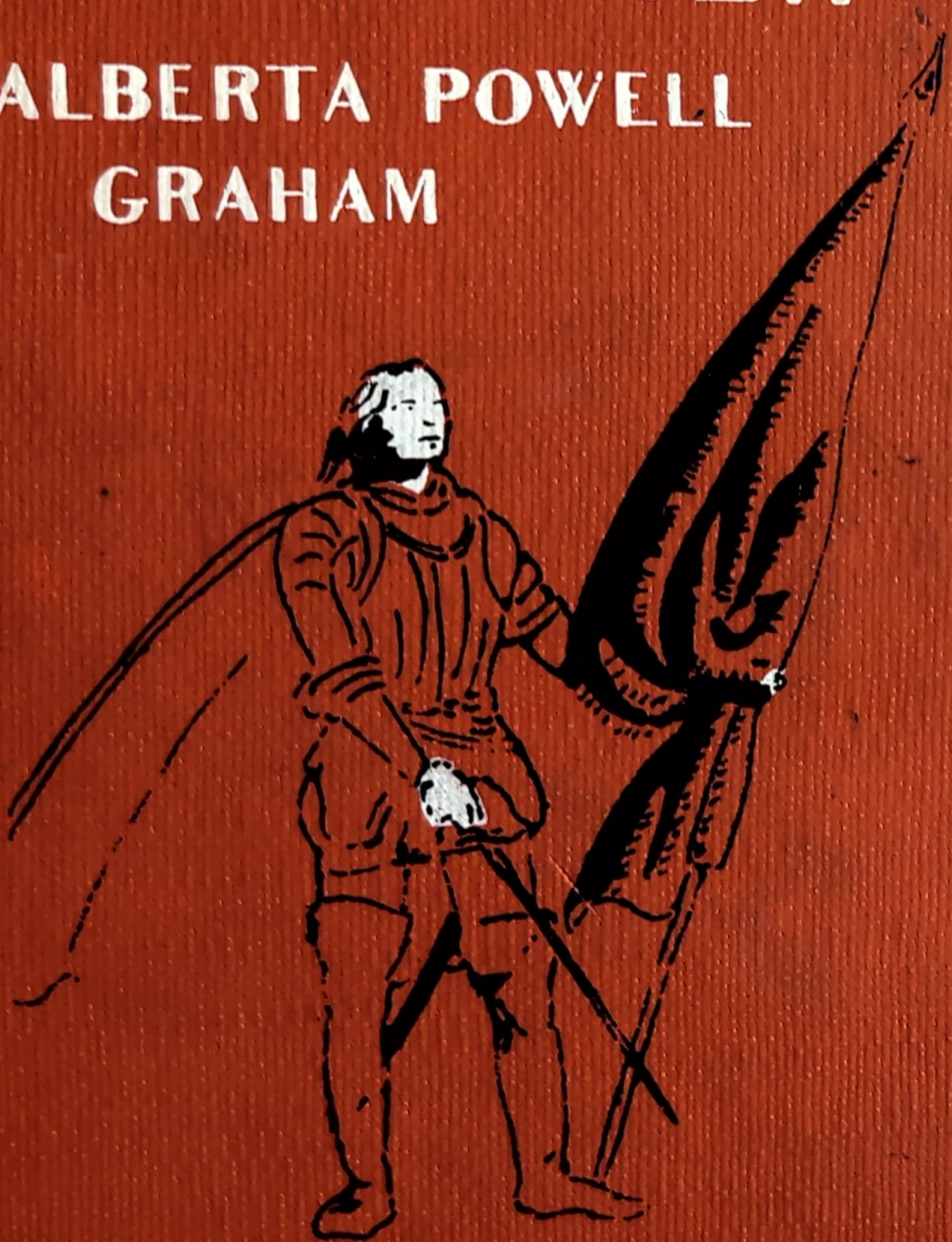
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS DISCOVERER

ALBERTA POWELL GRAHAM



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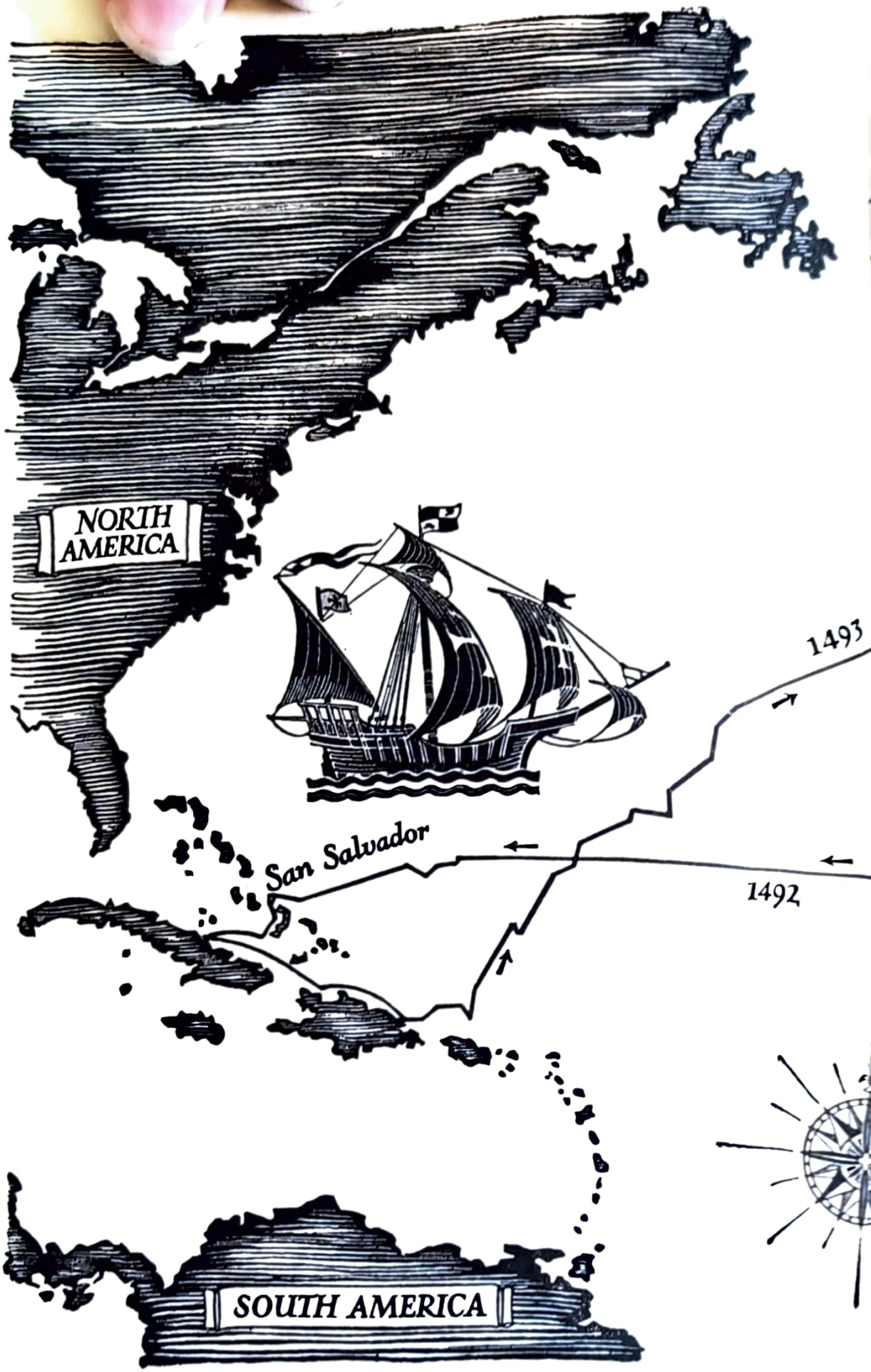
DISCOVERER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1493
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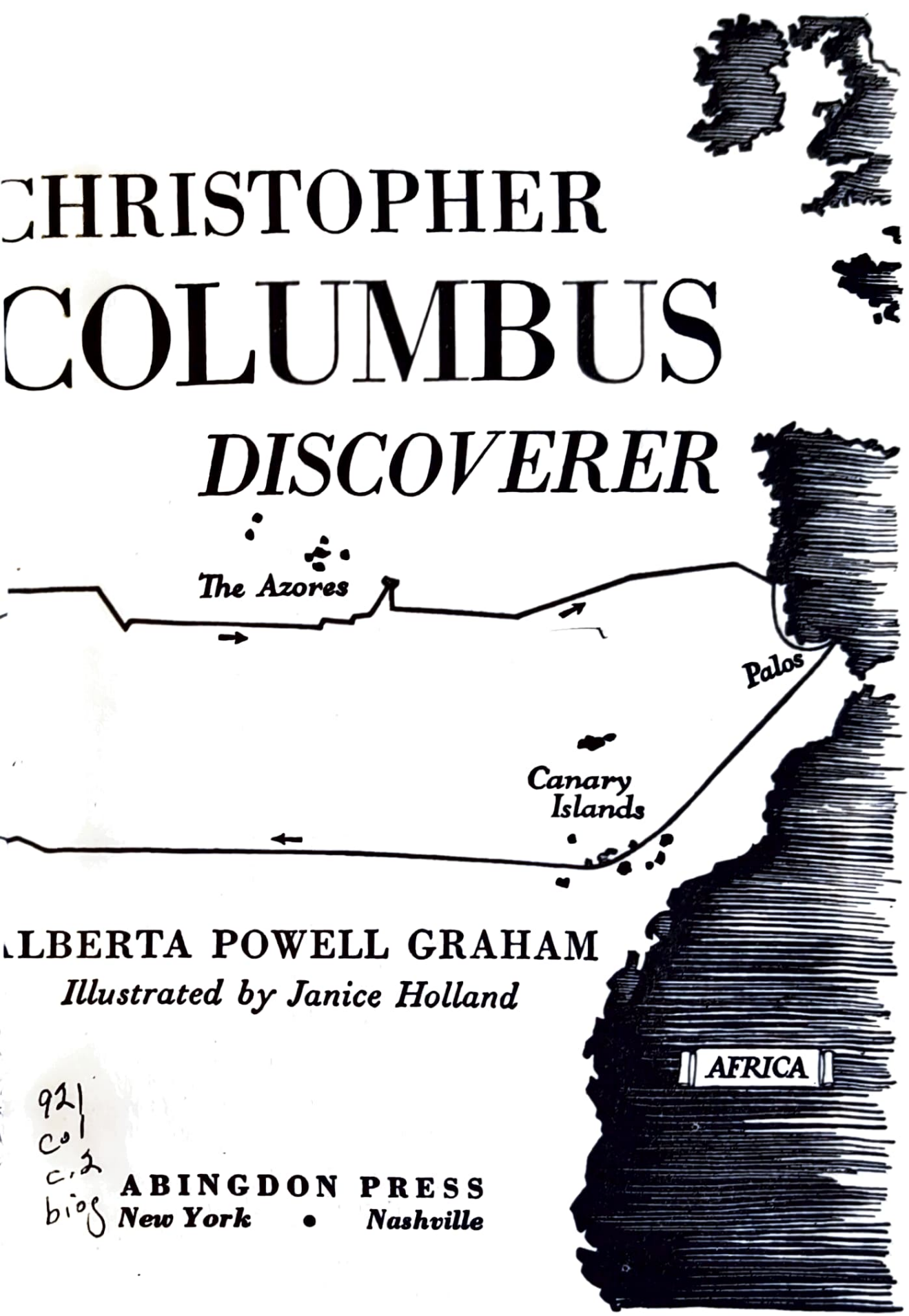
SOUTH AMERICA

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

DISCOVERER



ALBERTA POWELL GRAHAM

Illustrated by Janice Holland

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New York • Nashville

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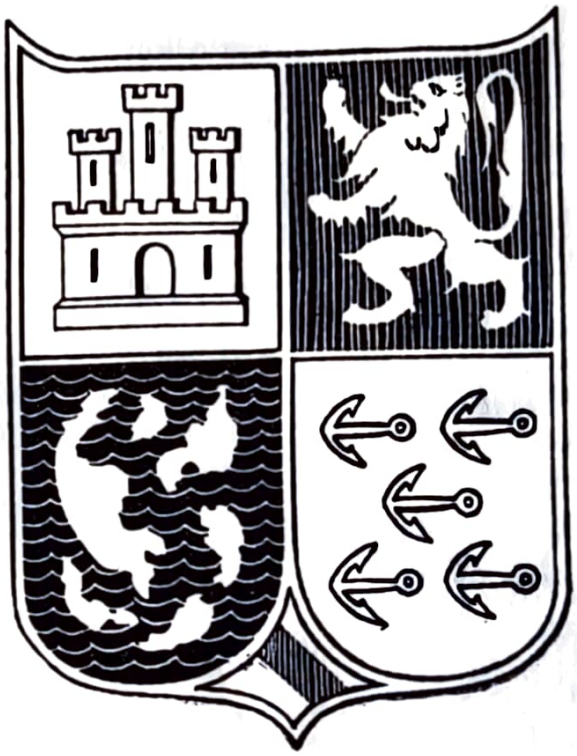
To Effie A. Powell, with appreciation



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CHAPTER ONE

• ON THE DOCK •

Christopher Columbus perched on a post at the end of the dock. Far across the water he could see just the tips of the masts of a ship. He watched for a while. Little by little the masts grew taller. At last he could see the tops of the white sails.

His eyes grew tired of looking at one spot for so long. He closed them for a moment and turned his back to the water. Now he faced the beautiful city of Genoa, where he lived. Even with his eyes closed Christopher could see this city he knew so well.

Along the water's edge there was the old, high stone wall. It had been built long ago to

protect the city. Guards were always on duty in each of the eight watchtowers above the eight gates in the wall. Just inside the wall were the houses and shops where the poorer people of Genoa lived and worked. The palaces of the noblemen were higher on the steep streets which led from the waterfront up the hillsides. These great houses seemed to march up toward the churches which stood at the very tops of the hills.

Christopher turned to look for the ship again. It was still far away.

Suddenly he jumped as someone slapped him on the back. He whirled around and his frown quickly changed to a smile. There stood Andrea, his best friend, grinning at him.

"Come on," said Andrea. "Let's go up the hill to our lookout and watch that ship come in."

Christopher slid down off the post. "

have to take my little brother home first."

Little Bartholomew was playing in the sand nearby. He did not want to leave. But the boys picked him up and dragged him along between them.

They hurried through the gate in the wall and past the big market place into a street where food and goods of every kind were sold. They walked more slowly here. Strings of macaroni hung from wires above big bins. Boots and shoes were strung on ropes fastened to the fronts of shops. Gay-colored shawls, scarves, and baskets were spread out in booths.

Then the boys turned into a side street. There the buildings were squeezed close together between the bay and the foot of the steep hills. Most of the houses were five or six stories high. There was more room up in the air than down on the ground!

The Columbus house was on the Street of

the Weavers. It had six floors, with one room on each floor. The shop where Christopher's father worked as a weaver was on the first floor. On the second floor was the room with the fireplace, where the family cooked, ate, and lived. There were four more rooms, one above the other, which were used for sleeping.

Andrea and Christopher pushed the hoop ing Bartholomew into the shop. Then they hurried on up the hilly street.

Suddenly they heard a voice crying, "Get of the way!" It was old Silvio, the woodcutter. He and his donkey were returning from the forest where Silvio had cut his daily load of wood. He laughed as the boys jumped to the side of the road.

But the next laugh was theirs. A rumbling man's carriage came clattering down the narrow, stony road. It crowded Silvio and his donkey into the ditch.

Andrea looked after the carriage. Then

looked up at the palace from which it had come.

"I wish I lived in a palace like that," he said to Columbus. "I'd sit in the tower all day and watch for ships."

"Oh, I'd rather live where we do," said Christopher dreamily—"closer to the sea. I can run down to the dock and be there when the ships come in. I like to talk to the sailors and hear about the lands they've seen. I'm going to sea some day—maybe next year."

"Next year! You're only nine. A captain wouldn't take just a boy!" said Andrea.

Christopher wasn't even listening. He had turned and was looking toward the sea. "We won't have time to go to the top," he cried. "Look! That ship's almost in. Let's go back!"

The boys went racing down the hill to the waterfront. As they ran, they watched the ship coming into port. They could see that it was a large one.

"Why, it's the 'San Remo'! That's the sh
Uncle Antonio sailed on," said Christophe
almost out of breath.

When the boys reached the dock, t
travelers were crowded together on the de
of the ship. They were waiting to land. Ma
of them were waving and calling to excit
friends on the dock.

Christopher and Andrea crowded close
watch. Down the ladder came the passenge
talking in their different languages. Th
were men from India in long robes a
jeweled turbans. There were merchants
colorful, embroidered garments from Cath
as China was called. There were bla
gowned priests, gypsies in gay outfits, rich
dressed noblemen, and many other travele

Christopher and Andrea raced around t
dock until they found Christopher's Un
Antonio. He and the other sailors were
loading the cargo. When he caught sig

Christopher he shouted, "Well, my lad, I thought you'd be down here!"

"Oh, Uncle Antonio, where have you been this time? You've been gone so long!"

"That we have! We've been all the way to Cathay."

"That's why we smelled the spices. What else is on the 'San Remo'?"

"You run along now. I have work to do. I'll tell you all about it later."

More boys had come to the dock. They all crowded as close as they could to watch. When the last piece of cargo had been unloaded, Christopher joined his Uncle Antonio. This time he was not so busy. He pointed out the bundles of silks, satins, and velvets from Cipango—the name for Japan; the spices and tea leaves from Cathay; and the long rolls of rugs from India.

Soon Christopher and his uncle started for home. The other boys stayed to play.

"You'll stop at our house, won't you, Unc
Antonio?" asked Christopher.

"I must go to my own home first. I want
see my wife and the boys," Antonio answere
"But I'll come back to your house later
You shall hear everything that happened
this voyage."

Christopher glanced curiously at the bu
ing bag his uncle carried. He remembered
gifts this jolly uncle always brought whe
came home from a voyage. He remembe
too, the wonderful tales he told of the stra
places he had seen.

Antonio looked up at the tall building ab
him. "No wonder you love the sea, lad.
know you were born right up there in
watchtower overlooking the harbor."

Christopher looked at the high to
where he had spent the first four years o
life. "I don't remember living there," he
"But Mother often tells me how she hel

up to look out the window at the ships."

When they reached the Columbus home, Christopher ran in to tell of his uncle's coming. The whole family — Bartholomew, his father, and his mother with the baby — crowded through the doorway to greet the traveler. Just then Antonio's wife, Christopher's Aunt Battestina, came hurrying down the street with Matteo and Tomaso running beside her. The little boys jumped into their father's arms.

"Good-by now," called Uncle Antonio. "We will come back after supper."

After the supper hour, Uncle Antonio returned with his family and his big bag. All of the two families talked and laughed together as they went into the fireplace room.

For Christopher this was an exciting evening. Uncle Antonio sat before the fire and told stories of the sea and of strange people in faraway countries.

Then came the big moment when Uncle An
tonio opened his bag. He had brough
presents for everyone. There were strang
toys for the little children, shawls and silk
for the ladies. Will my turn never come
thought Christopher. Finally it did.

"Here, Chris," said his uncle. "This is you
present."

Christopher unrolled the long packag
wonderingly. His eyes grew big as he sa
what it was. He looked eagerly at it — a ma
of the distant lands of the East. It was fine
drawn in many rich colors. It pictured do
phins, great fish, porpoises playing in the bl
seas and huge whales, spouting water a
showing their cruel teeth. It was a map
wonders and of dreams.

Christopher was so thrilled that he cou
not say a word. Antonio saw that he h
brought the best gift to please this sea-lovi
nephew of his.

Christopher did not hear his uncle leave. He was flat on his stomach, his map spread on the floor before him, studying it and dreaming. How he wished he might go to those far-off islands! Some day, perhaps, some day, when he had grown up, like Uncle Antonio . . . some day . . .

CHAPTER TWO

THE BOY WHO LOVED THE SEA

Before long Antonio Columbus went ba
to sea again. Christopher remembered h
stories. The wonderful map was still his m
precious possession. He took it with him
school. He had been to the school which t
weavers kept for their own children. Now
attended a class taught by the priests.

Christopher liked to learn about eve
thing that had to do with ships and the s
He liked geography, mathematics, and
tronomy. He knew how important the stu
of the stars was to sailors. By watching
stars they guided their vessels on the s
Best of all, Christopher liked to draw ma

He missed Andrea, who had been his best friend and playmate. Andrea, who was a year or so older than Christopher, had gone to work with his uncle, a fisherman. But Christopher's younger brother, Bartholomew, was now in school with him. They liked the same studies. On the way to and from school they often talked about the unknown seas. They talked about the shape of the earth too.

Christopher's teachers had taught him that the earth was round like a ball. But there were many ideas about the shape and the size of the earth. Some people said that it was not round at all, but as flat as the floor. Christopher had watched many ships come into the harbor. This made him sure that the earth was round.

One day, as the brothers stood on the wharf, Christopher explained this to Bartholomew.

"Look at that ship coming in," he said. "At

first you could see only the tops of the masts. But now you can see the whole ship. That surely proves that the earth is round!"

"Still believe that the earth is round, don't you, Chris?" called Andrea, who was with some boys on the dock. He said to them, "Chris has the crazy notion that the earth is round. He thinks a ship can sail west to get to the East."

The boys laughed. So did several sailors who were sitting on the edge of the dock.

"You're wrong, boy," said one of the old men. "Nobody could sail west very far."

Another seaman spoke up. "Every sailor knows that the western ocean is a sea of darkness," he said. "It is full of danger and mystery. No ship has ever sailed far out on it."

Christopher Columbus did not say a word. The sailors could say what they liked; he still believed that the earth was round.

The year Christopher was ten, his father

took him out of school and put him to work in the shop. Domenico Columbus expected each of his sons to learn the weavers' trade and help earn a living for the family. Even Susanna, the mother, worked in the shop. She spun the wool after it had been cleaned and combed.

Christopher's father bought the wool in different places and had it brought to him by captains of vessels sailing to those ports. At the shop it was dumped in one corner. Christopher's job was to clean out the burs and muddy tangles in the dirty sheep's wool. He did not like this work at all.

But there was one thing about the job he did like. That was to go on errands for his father. If his way took him by a place where maps were sold he stopped in. And he often went out of his way to pass by the dock and see a ship that had just come in.

Domenico Columbus had a good weaving

business. The shop was a busy place. Two apprentices were learning the trade. And as soon as Bartholomew was ten his father took him in, too.

Red-haired Christopher and black-haired Bartholomew sat on a bench side by side. Christopher soon taught his younger brother to clean and comb the wool and get it ready to spin.

"You don't like to do this work, do you, Chris?" Bartholomew asked one day.

"No, I don't!" said Christopher. He brushed the wool furiously.

Christopher's father heard what his son said. He saw that the boy was unhappy. "Come over here, Christopher," he called.

Christopher got up slowly. He went over and stood silently before his father.

"Captain Cuneo is going on a short trip to Corsica to collect some wool," his father said. "I am going to let you go with him."

Christopher was surprised. His face glowed with happiness. "When, Father?" he asked.

"Tomorrow, if you can be ready," replied Domenico.

Christopher dashed back to tell Bartholomew the exciting news. He finished cleaning his pile of wool, then rushed to get his things together.

So Christopher went on his first sea trip. He saw the sailors work and he did his part. He watched the captain steer the ship. At night he looked at the stars in the sky above. In Corsica he went with the captain to buy wool. Then he sailed home again. It was not a long trip, but it was an exciting one for Christopher.

He returned full of talk about the sea. The first thing he said to his father was, "How soon may I go with Captain Cuneo again?"

"Oh, sometime," his father said, "if we are not too busy in the shop."

Before long Christopher went on another short voyage with Captain Cuneo. This one took him to the Mediterranean. Then he went again and again. He went with Captain Cuneo and with some other captains, who were friends of his father.

On one ship Christopher traveled clear to the island of Chios in the Aegean Sea. There the vessel was loaded with mastic — a white gum taken from an evergreen tree and used for medicine and paint.

Between these trips Christopher helped his father in the weaver's shop. He and Bartholomew both became very good wool combers.

But Christopher grew more and more eager to go to sea. At fourteen he was quite tall. His serious face and quiet manner made him appear older than he was.

One day Christopher threw his wool aside and marched over to his father

"I hate this work!" he said. "Handling greasy, smelly wool! Won't you let me quit and go to sea?"

Domenico answered sadly, "I had hoped that you would follow the trade of your father and your grandfather. You could become a master weaver."

And Susanna exclaimed tearfully, "Oh, Christopher, you are too young to leave your home! Too young to go to sea and live among rough sailors! Think of the dangers, too."

"But, Mother," said Christopher, "the sea is all I can think about. I want to be out on it; to sail to new places, and to see new things."

"I had hoped that short trips would satisfy you," said his father. "But it seems that you are determined to be a sailor."

"Then you will give your consent?" asked Christopher.

"Yes," replied Domenico, "if that is what you wish."

Christopher hardly dared believe his ear
He knew that his father was disappointe
But he knew that he must live his life on th
sea, not in a shop. He thanked his father an
hurried down to the dock.

Christopher soon found a place as ship bo
on a vessel bound for Africa. This seeme
very exciting to him. Never before had h
sailed so far from his own city of Geno
Never before had he sailed to another co
tinent.

A ship boy had many unpleasant task
Scrubbing the decks was one of them. Th
first time Christopher walked across the de
carrying a pail of water, he was tripped by
couple of sailors. He fell flat on his face an
the dirty water spilled all over him. The sai
ors hooted with laughter.

"Look where you're going, Red!" th
yelled. "Don't be such a clumsy fool!"

Christopher got up. He was ready to figh

He started toward the man who had ma
him fall. "You! You!" he cried. Just in ti
he realized that the laughing sailors we
waiting for him to lose his temper. He turn
and, without a word, picked up his buck
and went on.

Besides scrubbing the deck Christoph
worked in the kitchen. And he watched
sandglass. Instead of clocks, the ship carri
mounted on a wooden frame, a sandgla
This was made of two hollow glass balls w
a narrow neck between. Just enough sa
was placed in the upper ball to flow throu
the small opening into the lower ball in a
hour. The ship boy had to watch and turn
glass over at the exact minute that the up
bowl was emptied.

Christopher did not enjoy the hard,
pleasant duties of his life as ship boy. Bu
was happy to learn the ways of ships as
were guided by stars over the changing

CHAPTER THREE

• COLUMBUS THE SAILOR •

As Christopher Columbus grew up, his red head became a familiar sight on many vessels. He learned to weigh anchor, to "hand, reef, and steer." He learned to watch the stars that guided the ships on their way. He sailed farther and farther from his home, sometimes through terrible storms.

After many voyages over the Mediterranean, Christopher became an able seaman. He returned to Genoa as often as possible. Once when he came back from a long voyage he found that Bartholomew had gone away from home to work. No one knew just where he had gone or what he was doing. This

grieved Christopher, for he had always lov
his younger brother.

During the summer of 1476, when he w
twenty-five years old, Columbus had an e
citing experience. He had sailed as one of t
crew in a fleet of vessels from Genoa. Th
had loaded a cargo of mastic at the island
Chios in the Aegean Sea. The captain pla
ned to sell it in Portugal and England. T
fleet had then sailed all the way across
Mediterranean Sea and through the Str
of Gibraltar, out into the great western s

Just as they rounded the tip of Portuga
huge fleet pounced upon them. These w
enemy vessels from France and Portug
There were many more of them than of
Italian ships. The sea fairly swarmed w
them. To Columbus it seemed that ene
ships came at them from every side. Th
was a battle — a fierce and long one. Ma
vessels were sunk, and hundreds of men w

killed. Columbus received a painful wound.

The "Bechalla," Columbus' ship, finally burst into flames and began to sink. The men jumped overboard. Columbus jumped, too. He was a strong swimmer, but his wound had weakened him. He tried to make his way through the wreckage around the burning ships, but he was having a hard time. He saw a long oar floating near him and seized it. By resting on it and pushing it ahead of him, he kept going slowly through the rough sea. All night long he clung to the oar.

In the early dawn, Columbus found himself dazed and exhausted, lying on a sandy beach. He was still clutching the oar. He heard friendly voices. The people in the Portuguese village of Lagos had seen the sailors swimming toward the shore and had come to their rescue. They took the tired, wounded men into their homes.

When he was well again, Columbus made

his way to Lisbon. In this large seaport h
felt sure he could find work on a ship. Fort
nately, he met some friends whom he ha
known in Genoa. From these people h
learned some good news. Bartholomew, h
brother, was in Lisbon! He had opened a sh
where he made maps and charts.

Columbus lost no time in finding Bartho
mew's shop. The two brothers had a hap
meeting.

"This is a fine place," Christopher t
Bartholomew, after they had talked awhi
"You seem to have done well here. Map ma
ing must be a good business."

"A fair profit can be made at it," repl
Bartholomew. "You would like this wo
Chris. The shop is getting a little too large
me to handle. Why not give up the sea fo
while, and help me here?"

"I know of nothing that would please
more," said Christopher.

And so Christopher and Bartholomew became partners. They planned and drew maps and charts of the sea, its islands, and far-off lands. Columbus studied many subjects. He learned to read and write the Spanish language. He studied Latin too, because many of the books on geography were written in Latin. He also worked at mathematics and astronomy. He knew that a knowledge of these subjects was necessary to men who would sail the sea.

In the map-making shop Columbus met men who had traveled widely. Some of them had been on voyages over all the seas and to all known countries. Columbus listened as they told of their own and others' adventures. He found that he was not alone in his idea of sailing west to reach the far East. This idea was shared by many intelligent men. All the schools and universities were teaching that the earth was round.

But travelers to India were still following the land route over which Marco Polo had gone years before. It led over rugged mountain trails, through shifting desert sands, and across swift-flowing, unbridged rivers. Besides these dangers, on the return trip bands of robbers often lay hidden behind the cliffs and trees, ready to dash out and capture the rich loads of silks, jewels, or spices.

The Columbus brothers talked often about a waterway to India. They even traced such a journey on their maps. They wished with all their hearts that they might go on such a trip. But they knew that this would require many ships and much money, and they had neither.

CHAPTER FOUR

• IN LISBON •

Not far from the Columbus brothers' r
shop was the Covento Dos Santos, where th
was a school for young ladies. In it was a sm
chapel. Christopher often went to the servi
there.

Christopher Columbus was a hands
young man. He had a strong, attractive fa
ruddy cheeks, and bright blue eyes. He w
tall, slender, and very straight, and he walk
with a proud tilt of his head. His red hair a
fair skin made him stand out among
black-haired, dark-skinned Portuguese.

Columbus enjoyed the music of the cha
choir. He liked especially to look at one of

singers, Dona Felipa Perestrella a Moniz. In some way, no one knows just how, Felipa and Christopher met and fell in love. Felipa belonged to a noble family. Her mother was a widow and rather poor. She liked the young Italian map maker whom her daughter loved, and consented to their marriage.

The wedding took place in the year 1479. At first Christopher and his bride made their home with Felipa's mother in Lisbon. Felipa's father had been a captain in the service of Prince Henry, a famous Portuguese navigator. Because of Christopher's deep interest in the sea, Felipa's mother gave him all the maps, charts, and papers which had belonged to the captain. These maps deepened his interest in discovering a water route to India.

Not long after their marriage, Columbus left the map shop and he and Felipa went to live on the Island of Porto Santo. The governor of this island off the southwest coast of

Portugal was Felipa's brother, Captain Bar
tholomew Perestrello. He and Columbus be
came good friends. He too came to believe i
the idea of sailing west across the unknow
Ocean Sea to find a waterway to India. Gov
ernor Perestrello showed Columbus som
pieces of strange carved wood and some gian
stalks of cane that had been washed up o
the beach. These things were not like an
thing anyone had seen before in Porto Sant
They had come from somewhere across th
unknown Ocean Sea and added to its myster

Felipa's and Christopher's son, little Dieg
was born on the Island of Porto Santo
1480. Soon afterward, Columbus again we
to sea. He sailed across the Mediterranea
Sea; he sailed to England and to Ireland. H
even sailed up to the far northern country
Thule, later to be called Iceland. And he ma
several voyages to the coast of Africa.

Columbus learned many helpful thin

from those voyages. He never failed to ask the Portuguese sailors about other journeys they had made and about the faraway places they had seen. All the time, no matter where he was, he could not get out of his mind the thought of sailing to India by way of the Ocean Sea. He felt sure that his idea of sailing west was right. He knew that he could prove it by sailing over the Sea of Darkness, until he circled the earth and reached the East. Then he would return the same way, bringing with him great riches.

But how could he do it? A voyage like this would take money — a great deal of it — and he had no money. The friends who believed in him and in his ideas were all poor people. Even his home city of Genoa was not wealthy enough to pay for such a voyage. "If I could only interest some rich country in this!" he said to his wife's brother.

Then Captain Perestrello spoke up. "Why

not try Portugal? It is a rich country, and King John would like to make it richer. Why not ask him for the money?"

"A fine plan!" said Christopher. "I'll do it."

For a long time the two countries of Spain and Portugal had been leaders in making voyages of discovery. But just now Spain was poor because of wars. Portugal was ahead in the search for new lands and new ways of reaching them.

Columbus left Porto Santo and sailed to Lisbon. There at the Royal Court of Portugal he laid his plans before King John. The king listened closely.

"Your plans interest me greatly," said King John, "but even though I am the king I cannot decide upon such an important matter alone. You must meet with the committee which considers all Portugal's voyages of discovery. In the meantime," the king said, "leave all your maps, charts, and papers here

I wish to look over them more carefully."

Columbus told his story over again to the men on the committee. And, although he did not like doing it, he left his precious charts and maps with the king.

And then King John played a very dishonest trick on honest Christopher Columbus. The king sent for one of his favorite captains. He gave him Columbus' maps and a fine ship with a large crew. Then he ordered him to sail out across the Ocean Sea and find the new way to India that Columbus had planned to discover.

Fortunately for Columbus, the captain ran into trouble. Almost as soon as his vessel set sail, terrible storms arose, one after another. The captain and the crew were too frightened to go any farther out on the Sea of Darkness. They turned back into Lisbon Harbor.

The captain reported to King John that no one could possibly sail to those places on

Columbus' maps. The men of the committee told the king the same thing. They said that Columbus' ideas were impossible and that no one could follow his plans.

Columbus had spent many long weeks at court, waiting for a decision. When he heard the committee's report and learned of King John's unfair act, Columbus left the court of the Portuguese king in anger and disgust.

Just at that time a far greater sorrow came to Columbus. His beloved wife Felipa died.

"Of all the troubles that could come to me," Christopher told his brother Bartholomew, "this is the worst! My dear wife dead, and little Diego motherless. I scarcely know where to turn."

CHAPTER FIVE

A VISIT TO A QUEEN

Sad and discouraged though he was, Columbus was not ready to give up. He was more than ever determined to sail across the Ocean Sea to find India and Cathay.

"You must not stop now," his brother Bartholomew told him. "If King John will not help you, I think you should ask the king and queen of Spain."

"Yes," replied Columbus, "I agree. I shall go to see the king and queen of Spain. Nothing worse can happen than to be refused again."

"What will you do with Diego?" Bartholomew wanted to know.

"I could go to Huelva, near Palos," Colum-
bus said sadly. "Felipa's sisters live there an
I could leave Diego with them for a while.
From Huelva I could go on to Cordova to se
King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella."

Columbus got back his papers, maps, an
notes from King John. With his little so
Diego he took passage on a small ship fo
Palos, Spain.

Diego was a loving little fellow. He miss
his mother sadly. He had not seen much of h
father while he was at the Portuguese cou
On the boat Columbus had time to hold Die
in his arms and tell him stories of his own bo
hood in Genoa and of his adventures on t
sea. The little boy was a great comfort to h
lonely father.

Diego was full of questions. "What a
those buildings up on the hill?" he asked
the ship was entering the River Tinto, a fe
miles from Palos.

"That is the monastery of La Rabida," replied Columbus. This answer gave him a thought: "There," he said to himself, "might be a better place for Diego to stay than with relatives whom he has never seen. He might be happier there."

So when they landed at Palos, Christopher turned toward the road up the hill to La Rabida. He took Diego's hand in his. "Son," he asked, "do you think you are man enough to walk to the buildings on that hill?"

"I'll try, Father," said Diego, "but it is very far away."

"I will carry you when you are tired," his father promised, smiling down into his eyes.

They stopped often to rest, and part of the way Diego rode on Columbus' broad shoulders. At last they reached the monastery. A monk at the gate welcomed them.

"May I ask for a drink of water and some bread for my little son?"

"Come in, friend. There is food for b
of you," said the gatekeeper kindly.

Friar Juan Perez, the priest at the hea
La Rabida, came out to talk with the
stranger. Columbus eagerly told Friar J
the reason for his journey.

The stranger's story was so interesting
the priest invited Columbus to stay a

days. He wanted him to talk over his ideas with some friends.

Father Perez believed in Columbus' plans. "But," he told Columbus, "you must get some wealthy Spanish nobleman to help you make your appeal to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella."

Columbus shook his head. "I have no friends in Spain," he replied, "and as for wealth — all my friends, everywhere, are poor."

So Father Perez wrote a letter to his good friend, Father Antonio de Marchena, a priest in Seville. He told him of Columbus' wish to see the king and queen. He told why he thought it was urgent, and he asked Father Marchena to help.

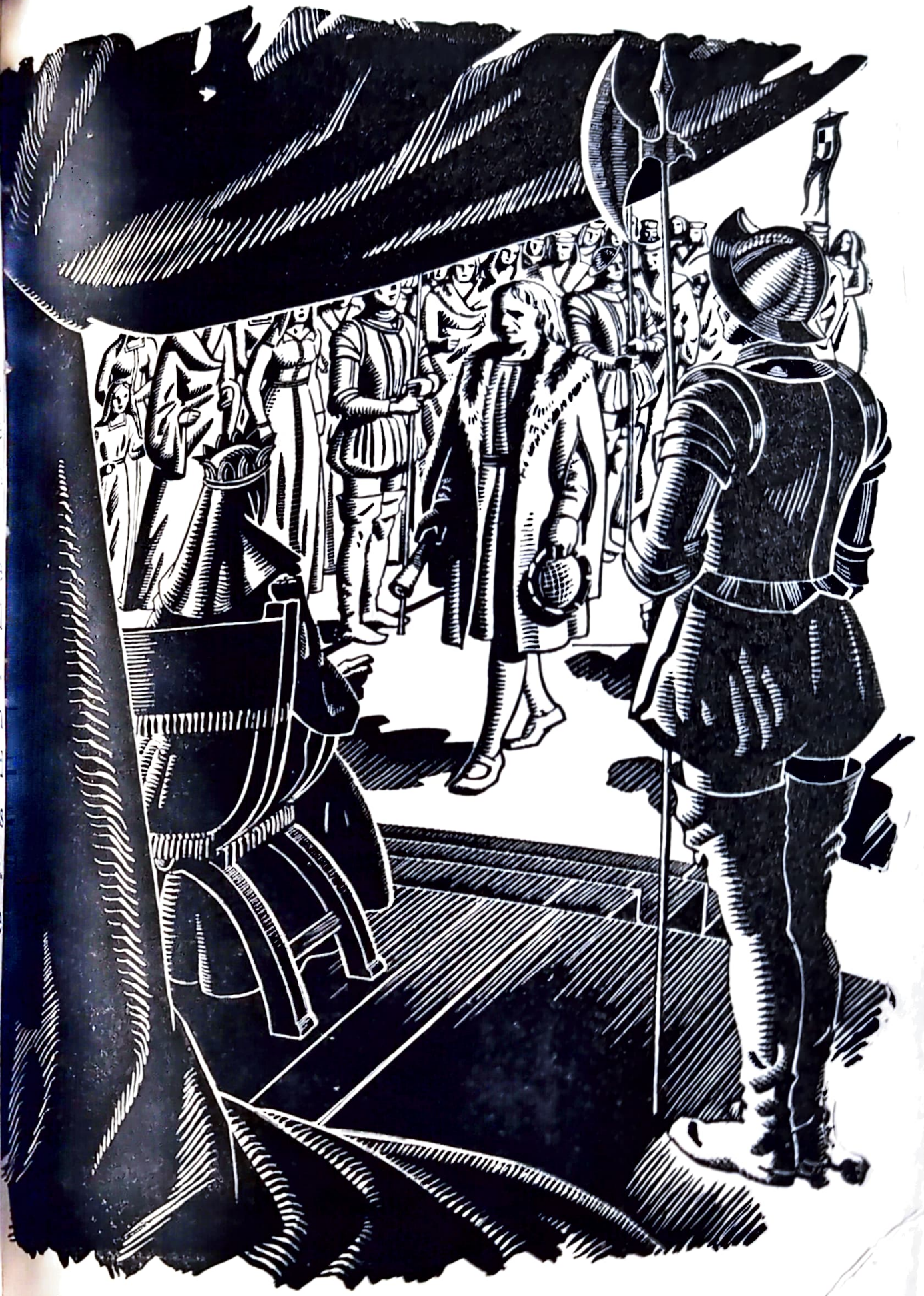
Father Marchena took Father Perez's letter to the wealthy Count Medina Celi. The count, in his turn, wrote Queen Isabella and asked her to receive Christopher Columbus

and listen to his request. He wrote more. He promised that if the queen agreed to Columbus' proposal, he — Count Medina Celi — would like her permission to supply the money for the voyage.

After a long time Queen Isabella replied to Count Medina's letter. She wrote that she would like to see Columbus, but that she was on the battle fronts with King Ferdinand, where the army was trying to conquer the Moors. She could see no one, she said, until their enemies had been driven from Spain.

For months Columbus and his little son waited at La Rabida. Then at last, weeks and months later — May, 1486 — Columbus was called to meet the king and queen at Cordova. The Moors had not been conquered, but the queen had decided to see him anyway.

Columbus hurried to Cordova. Forgetting his worn clothing, he walked down the long hall, his head held high.



Isabella was a good queen and everyone loved her. She was a beautiful woman of about the same age as Columbus, with dark red hair and bright blue eyes. But King Ferdinand was not a pleasant person. He was as surly and grumpy as Isabella was kind and gracious.

As Columbus knelt before the throne, the queen greeted him in a friendly way and commanded him to tell his story.

"I have new lands and great treasures to give you, your majesties," Columbus said. He showed the maps of the journey he hoped to make across the mysterious Ocean Sea to India and Cathay.

The queen listened kindly. Then she explained to Columbus, "Of course you understand that no matter how much we may be interested in your plans, Spain cannot undertake such a voyage of discovery until her enemies are conquered."

And King Ferdinand added that the royal

councilors would have to give their judgment on the matter.

Once again Columbus' hopes were dashed. But he was encouraged when Isabella gave orders that he should be a guest of the Spanish court while he waited for their decision. She also ordered the royal treasurer to let Columbus live in his palace and to pay him an allowance of twelve thousand maravedis a year. This sounds like a great deal of money, but it was really very little, and Columbus soon had to add to it by making maps.

He stayed on in Cordova, encouraged by Isabella's interest. He hoped that Spain soon would give him the chance to sail across the Ocean Sea.

CHAPTER SIX

• WEARY WAITING •

For years the Spanish war with the Moors went on. Brave Queen Isabella, dressed from head to foot in her shining armor, rode at the head of the troops. Columbus was afraid that in her interest in the war, she might forget him. So he left his map making and followed the army from one battle front to another. Sometimes he even joined in the fighting.

He received one message from the queen in which she said that she had not forgotten about him and his plans. But as the war years went on, Columbus became more and more discouraged. His clothes grew shabbier; his long hair turned snowy white. He thought so

much about his ideas that he began to look old and queer. The children on the streets stared at him and laughed. They even put their fingers to their foreheads and called him "the crazy man."

Late in 1490, the royal councilors who had been considering Christopher Columbus' plan for so long, decided that it was an impossible one to carry out. But Queen Isabella did not accept their decision. She wrote Columbus again and asked him to wait until after the Spanish army conquered Granada. Then she would tell him what she had decided.

Six months later Columbus' patience gave out. The Spanish army still had not conquered Granada. "Spain is not going to do anything to give me money and ships for the voyage," Columbus declared. "I will go to France to see if I can interest King Charles."

Columbus set out at once. He went first to La Rabida to see his son. Diego had been

living and going to school at the monastery through all these years of waiting.

It was a long, tiring walk. But Columbus had no horse or mule, and there was no other way for him to travel across Spain. When he reached La Rabida, he was cheered by the loving welcome from his eleven-year-old son and the warm greeting from the friars.

Father Juan Perez was deeply disappointed that the Spanish king and queen had not given Columbus a chance to prove his ideas. "It must not end this way," he said firmly. "They do not know what a loss it would mean to their country."

"Yes, Father, I have a world to give away," said Columbus sadly, "besides bringing the wealth of the Indies back to Spain. All I need is ships." He sighed as he thought of his delayed dreams. Then he lifted his head with determination.

"I shall not wait longer for the Spanish

rulers to make up their minds," he said. "I shall go on to France and try at the court there."

"No, no! Wait, my friend," begged Father Perez. "Stay here, and I myself will try to get a message to Queen Isabella. If that does no good, then go to France."

"It will do no good, I fear," said Columbus unhappily.

"At least let me try."

Father Perez then explained that some years ago he had been Isabella's confessor. "She heeded my advice then," he told Columbus. "Even though she is now a powerful queen, my word may yet have some weight with her."

"I will wait," promised Columbus, "though I have little hope."

Father Perez wrote at once to Queen Isabella and sent the letter to her by a messenger.

In two weeks' time an answer arrived. Queen Isabella thanked Father Perez for reminding her of her duty. She commanded that Columbus remain at La Rabida until he received further word from her and that Father Perez come at once to the royal court.

Father Perez was so pleased and excited that he would not even wait until morning to set out. He borrowed a mule, bundled himself up in warm clothes, and started off at midnight that same cold night.

And soon Columbus received a surprise. A letter came to him from Queen Isabella enclosing a gift of twenty thousand maravedis. She ordered him to use this money to buy himself a suitable outfit of clothes and a mule, and then to come to the royal court as quickly as possible.

On January 2, 1492, the Moors gave up the city of Granada to Spain. Columbus arrived at the court in time to join in the joyous cele-

bration and to see the procession of the victorious army.

A few days later the king and queen asked Columbus to appear before them. There he was told that Ferdinand and Isabella had been interested in his plans but that they, as well as the royal councilors, were surprised and shocked at the huge rewards he had demanded for his services. The terms he had given for this voyage of discovery were read aloud:

> That I, Christopher Columbus, shall be the Admiral of the Ocean Sea, I and my heirs forever.
>
> That I shall be ruler over all lands discovered and choose the governor of each land.
>
> That I shall have one-tenth of all profits upon all the pearls, gems, gold, silver, spices, and other valuable things to be found.

The members of the council stared at Columbus angrily.

The king said gruffly, "Your price is high, Senor Columbus."

"I am sorry you think so, your majesty," replied Columbus. "It is a dangerous voyage I am offering to take for you."

The queen looked down sadly, saying nothing.

"We can do nothing more, senor," said King Ferdinand. "We wish you good fortune."

Columbus was deeply hurt over the unexpected refusal of the king and queen to his terms. He grew angry and bitter as he thought of the years — almost seven — that he had been waiting for their decision. He rushed angrily out of the audience chamber. He packed his few belongings, mounted his mule, and galloped away.

CHAPTER SEVEN

• A SURPRISE •

Lonely, sad, and filled with angry thoughts, Columbus rode along the country road. His temper had cooled down a little. He began to think about what the king had said and to wonder if he had asked too high a price.

No, thought Columbus as he jogged across the little bridge at Pinos, the long years I have waited ought to be paid for. Perhaps I should have been more patient, though, and should have tried to talk again with the queen. But it is too late to think of that now. King Charles of France is my next hope.

Suddenly Columbus was roused from his thoughts by the hoofbeats of a galloping

horse. A voice called his name. "Senor Columbus, stop! The queen commands."

Columbus stopped his mule. A royal messenger drew up his panting horse.

"I come from the queen," the messenger said. "Her majesty bids you to return to the court. She bids me tell you that she is ready to meet your demands."

At first Columbus stared at the man in

silent surprise. Then he found words. "She is ready to meet my demands?"

"That is what her majesty said," the messenger replied.

Still Columbus hesitated. He thought of other times when he had been called to the court and nothing had come of it.

The messenger added, "The queen said, sir, to tell you that you need fear no more refusals."

Columbus looked into the man's face. "Hasten back to the queen," he said. "Tell her I will follow as fast as my mule can bring me."

The royal messenger whirled his horse and rode swiftly away. For a while Columbus sat where he was, on the little bridge of Pinos, with closed eyes and bowed head. Then, with a smile of happiness unknown to his face for many long months, he turned his mule and rode after the messenger.

Luis de Santangel, Ferdinand's private treasurer, was Columbus' best friend at the Spanish court. He had been so grieved over the decision of the king and queen that he had gone at once to talk to Queen Isabella. He told her that he believed she was making a serious mistake. "Some other monarch," he said, "will accept Columbus' offer. Then Spain will have lost this chance to gain new lands and great riches."

Isabella listened in silence.

"You could have become the wealthiest queen in the world," Santangel went on.

Still Isabella did not speak.

Then Santangel added, "My queen, you are also losing a chance to add these new lands and their people to your church. I beg you, think wisely."

Queen Isabella was no longer silent.

"I know now what must be done!" she cried. "Quick! Send for Columbus to return."

Santangel smiled. "No one knows better than I how these long wars have emptied your treasury," he told the queen. "Columbus will fill it again with the wealth he finds. I am so sure of this that I personally will gladly furnish the money for this voyage."

The queen grew more excited. "Hurry, Santangel! Send a messenger to overtake Columbus. We must bring him back. But you shall not furnish the money. If Spain will not spend her money, or Ferdinand risk his, I will do it alone. I will pawn my jewels if necessary. Columbus must go on that great voyage of discovery. Tell him I agree to all he asks. He need fear no more refusals."

Columbus was met at the palace gate by Father Perez and Luis de Santangel. They told him what had happened.

There was much business to be settled in preparing for the great voyage. Columbus asked Father Perez and Luis de Santangel to

handle all these matters. He must leave for Palos, the port from which he would sail.

Columbus wondered if Diego should stay on at La Rabida. Queen Isabella settled that question by appointing Diego as a page to her young son, Prince Juan. This was a great relief to Columbus. It meant that Diego would receive the very best education and training.

At last all the agreements and contracts were written and signed. Christopher Columbus read with pride:

> . . . For as much as you, Christopher Columbus, are going by our command . . . it is our will and pleasure that you . . . shall be our Admiral, and Viceroy, and Governor.
>
> I, THE KING I, THE QUEEN

Queen Isabella had many talks with Columbus. She told him what she wished him to do in the new lands across the unknown sea. "Conquer the natives with kindness," she urged, "and make friends of them."

CHAPTER EIGHT

• PREPARATIONS •

One morning, just a week after Columbus arrived at Palos, the townspeople were startled to hear the clanging of the bell of St. George's church.

"What is the matter?" asked one neighbor of another. "There's no church service at this hour."

"It must be some important news!" cried one.

"Perhaps there's been a shipwreck."

"Come on, let's hurry! We must find out what has happened."

Everyone, young and old, ran to the church. The square in front of the building was

packed with people. On the church steps stood the mayor, the councilors, the notary public, Father Juan Perez, and Christopher Columbus.

When the bell stopped ringing, the mayor held up his hand for silence. Then he spoke in a very loud voice:

"Captain Christopher Columbus has brought you a message from their royal highnesses. The notary public will read it to you."

Columbus held the scroll high so everyone could see it. "I beg you to obey this command of their majesties," he said. Then he handed the scroll to the notary, who read the long message aloud.

It reminded the people of Palos that some time before they had committed an act which had displeased their king and queen. As a punishment, Ferdinand and Isabella had ordered that they furnish the rulers of Spain

free, for one year, two sailing vessels, all in order and equipped, "ready for the service of the crown."

Now, the notary read, the rulers commanded that these vessels be furnished to Captain Columbus. He would pay, in advance, four months' wages to the men of Palos who sailed with him.

The notary read and repeated the final words of the letter:

> We command you to have the two caravels ready for our Captain Columbus within ten days after hearing this letter.
>
> Signed:
>
> I, FERDINAND I, ISABELLA

How the angry tongues chattered as the people left the square.

"Within ten days!" they cried. "That is not possible. They should have said within ten months."

They argued, muttered, and grumbled. "It

cannot be done in that time," they insisted. "It cannot be done!"

Columbus talked to the men. He promised that he would take them to find gold and rich treasures in the East and told them that their wages would be high.

But no one wanted to go on such a voyage. Many of the people of Palos still believed that the earth was flat. Some said, "It is nonsense to think of sailing west to reach the East."

The wives and sweethearts of the men were all against the plan. "If the earth is round," they said, "the ships will sail downhill and will never be able to come back. No ship can sail uphill."

"Who is this Captain Columbus?" the older women asked. "He must be crazy with his wild ideas!"

But one sailor of Palos — Martin Alonzo Pinzon — believed in Columbus' plan. He had believed in it since, years before, he had

talked to Columbus at the monastery with Father Perez. The Pinzons — Martin Alonzo and his brothers Vicente Yanez and Francisco Martin, and an older cousin of Martin — all believed in the idea. The Pinzons were good sailors and were well known to everyone in Palos. Their faith in Columbus led many doubting sailors to follow their example and to sign their names on Columbus' list.

With Martin Pinzon's help, Columbus was able to add a third ship to the two vessels provided by the citizens of Palos. Ninety men would be required for the three ships. To get this number, the king's soldiers took some men aboard by force and offered pardons to some debtors and to a few convicts who had been put in prison for some small offense.

The "Santa Maria," the largest of the three vessels, was to be the flagship. This would carry the Commander of the Fleet, the Admiral Don Christopher Columbus. With him

went his page boy, Pedro Acevedo, a personal servant, and forty men.

Martin Pinzon was made captain of the "Pinta." He had twenty-six men with him.

The little "Nina," which means *baby* in Spanish, was under the command of Vicente Yanez Pinzon, with a company of twenty-four men.

Columbus had been careful to include men who would be helpful in different ways. He had surgeons, doctors, a lawyer, a learned man who spoke almost a dozen languages, a jeweler, and a silversmith. These last two, he thought, would know about the precious stones he expected to find.

It took time to get together all the supplies which were needed and to load them on the ships. Finally everything was ready for the sailing, but it had taken ten weeks instead of ten days!

In the early dawn on Friday, August 3,

1492, Admiral Christopher Columbus and his officers and crew gathered in Saint George's church. There Father Juan Perez held a farewell service and asked God's blessing upon them and upon the great voyage.

The "Santa Maria," the "Pinta," and the "Nina" hoisted their anchors. The Admiral of the Ocean Sea waved a last time to Diego, who had come to see him leave, then turned to look ahead. The sailors rowed the ships with the long oars down the stream until they crossed the bar. There the sails caught the sea breeze.

The voyage had begun!

CHAPTER NINE

• OVER STRANGE SEAS •

Even as a small boy Columbus had dreamed of sailing across the uncharted Ocean Sea to find the rich lands of the East. Through all the years he had thought of this journey. He had studied maps and carefully planned the course he would follow.

Now he steered the ships south to reach the seven Canary Islands. From there he planned to sail west straight across the sea, to where he believed the Indies to be.

On the fourth day at sea the big rudder of the "Pinta" broke loose. Captain Pinzon was able to fix it, but the next day it broke loose again. There was nothing to do but to sail to

the Grand Canary Island. At Las Palmas, a settlement of some size, Captain Pinzon found a good blacksmith to repair his ship. While this was being done, the "Santa Maria" and the "Nina" sailed on to the Island of Gomera. There they took on supplies of wood, water, meat, and other provisions.

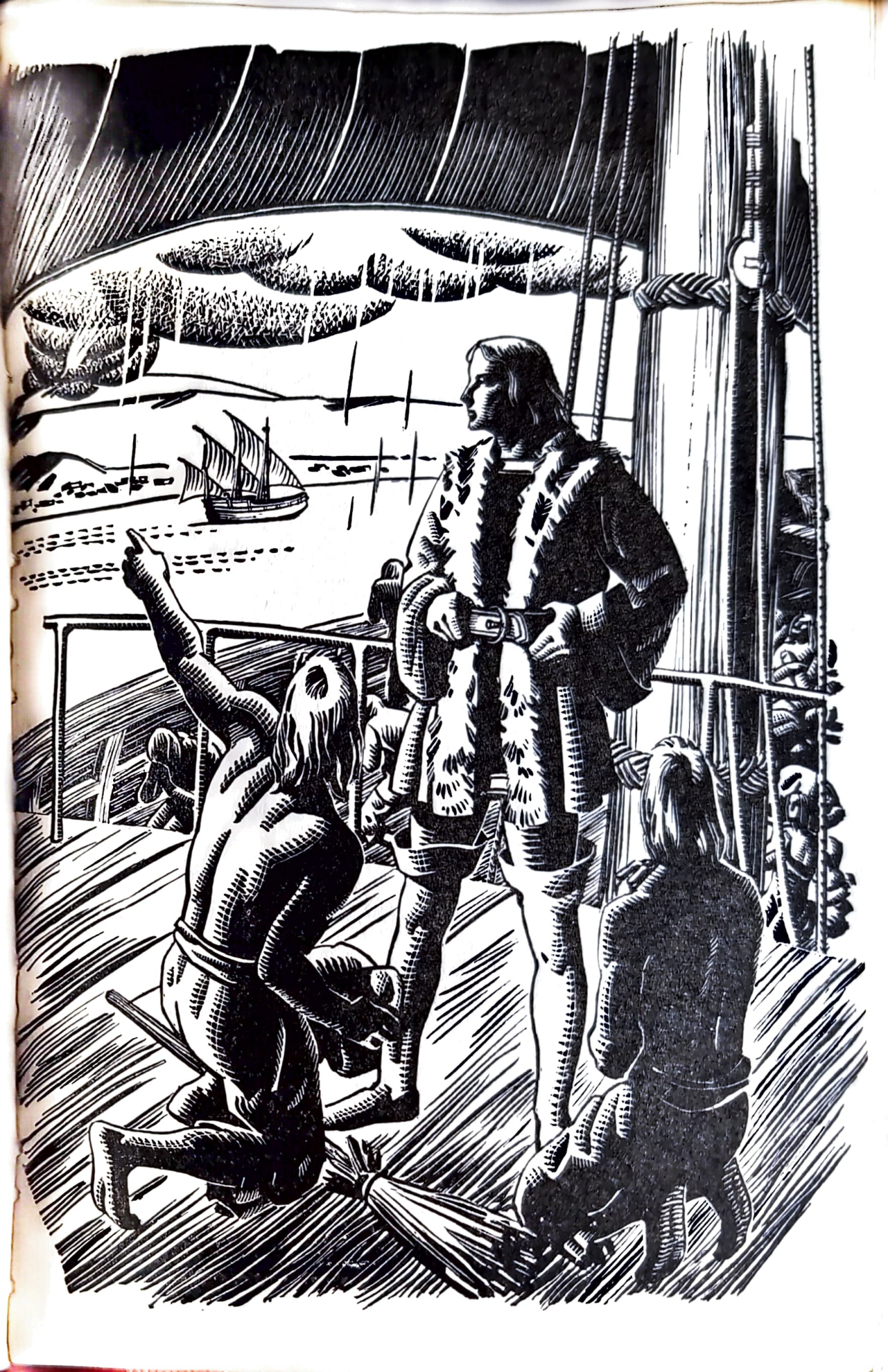
While they were still in the harbor at Gomera, the men had another fright. Some sailors told them that King John of Portugal had sent several warships to capture Columbus and his fleet. They said that these warships were waiting near the Island of Ferro. The sailors were all panic-stricken at the thought of being taken prisoners by the Portuguese. They begged Columbus to turn back, but he refused. He was determined to let nothing stop the voyage of discovery.

On September 6, the little fleet set off again. As it sailed by the Island of Teneriffe, the men saw a terrifying sight. Flames and smoke

spouted high in the air. To make it even more frightening, there was a violent earthquake. Most of the sailors had no idea what caused the flames to shoot out of that high mountain peak. Wild with fear, they wept, prayed to God to save them, and begged the admiral to turn back toward home and safety. But Columbus refused to do this. He did not know that Teneriffe was an active volcano. But he had vowed that nothing, not even fire or earthquake, would make him turn back.

When the fleet came near the Island of Ferro the crews were fearful. Every hour they thought the Portuguese ships would appear. But nothing was seen of the enemy ships. Perhaps, thought Columbus, it was only a rumor the Portuguese had spread to make him go back home.

On September 9, the fleet was completely out of sight of land for the first time. The men again begged their captains to go back. Co-



they would find great riches to take home. But most of them had no hope of ever seeing their homes again.

Many of the sailors, especially the older ones, had made voyages on the Mediterranean and even on the Ocean Sea as far west as the Canary Islands. But they had never before sailed on unknown seas. They knew that these waters were new to the captains and to the admiral himself, as well as to them.

The wind was blowing them west at a rapid rate. Columbus thought that the men might not be so fearful if they did not know how fast they were going into the unknown sea. He did not want them to know just how far they sailed from their homeland. So, without telling anyone, Columbus began to keep two records of each day's sailing. One was a true record which gave the exact distance the fleet

sailed ... record in a book which he kept locked, for his use only.

In another book he kept a different record. This record showed a much smaller number of miles for each day's run, and was for everyone to see.

The admiral told the men on all three vessels of the reward promised by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. The Spanish rulers had offered ten thousand maravedis to the man who first discovered land. This sum of money would be paid to the lucky man not just once, but every year of his life. In addition, Admiral Columbus would give the first man to see land an embroidered velvet jacket, as fine as that worn by any of the grandees of Spain.

The sailors were greatly pleased by the promises of these rewards. All of them began at once to watch eagerly for land.

CHAPTER TEN

• FEARS AND FANCIES •

The men were free from fear for a short time only. One night the steersman on duty on the "Santa Maria" tried to turn the vessel around and head her back toward Spain. But Columbus, too worried to sleep soundly, came out of his cabin in time to put an end to that scheme. He turned the vessel back and took the wheel himself to guide her on her western way. Every night after that a close watch was kept on the steersmen.

Columbus understood the fears of his men. He did not scold them. He called them together and once more explained kindly and patiently the aim of their voyage.

"You must remember," he said gravely, "that we are doing this for Queen Isabella. She has sent us out on this untried way across the Ocean Sea to find rich treasures in the East. We do not know how long this voyage may last, but we shall sail on until we reach Cipango, Cathay, or the Indies. We must not fail our queen!"

Columbus proved to be an expert navigator. He had only his compass, the common quadrant, and his sea charts to go by, besides the stars in the sky at night.

On September 13, the poor sailors had another fright — the ship's compass began to act strangely. Its needle pointed slightly to the northwest. Everyone believed that the needle of the compass always pointed straight to the north. The men thought that some of the dreadful monsters down in the sea were making the compass move from one side to the other.

"They will push the compass needle out of place and sweep our ship over the edge of the sea!" they cried. "Take us back home!"

Columbus was puzzled at the way the compass was acting, but he did not let anyone know that. He told the sailors that the compass needle was all right. He said that it was standing still but that the north star, Polaris, was moving over a little way as it always did in that middle part of the ocean. The men thought their admiral was sure of this, and their fears were calmed for a while.

Later on Columbus learned that he had been right. They had sailed into "the zone of westerly variation" — a place where the needle of the compass did not point directly to the north. Christopher Columbus was the first one to make this important discovery. Some of the older navigators knew of a similar place in the eastern waters, called "the zone of easterly variation."

First one thing and then another happened to keep fear in the hearts of the sailors. One day a huge meteor fell from the sky. It dropped with a loud, hissing noise into the sea only a few miles from the fleet. Pedro, the admiral's page, cried to Columbus in terror, "Master, the sky is going to fall down on us! We shall be burned in flames!"

"Hush, my boy," said Columbus kindly. Then he sat down beside the lad and explained to him and to the frightened sailors what it was that Pedro had seen.

For several days the men noticed tufts of green weeds floating about. They hoped they were coming to land. They were overjoyed. "Land! Land!" came the cry from each ship. But soon they saw that it was just a grassy covering on the water. Then they began to worry for fear the ships would get stuck in it.

Columbus was the only one who knew what it was. An old Portuguese sailor on Porto

Santo had told him about this Sea of Grass. The old sailor had said that a ship could sail through it without fear, as the weeds were not very thick on top of the water. The green plant was called gulfweed. It had no roots, but floated on the surface of the water, supported by tiny air sacs.

The admiral told all this to his crews. But the men believed that great sea monsters were under the grass, and that these monsters would destroy them.

In about a week the "Santa Maria," the "Pinta," and the "Nina" had crossed the Sea of Grass, as Columbus had said they would do. Once again the little fleet was on the clear, blue Ocean Sea.

Even then the men were fearful and unhappy. They grew more and more discouraged. They wanted to see land. They were tired of living in their crowded quarters and they were tired of one another.

Their work did not keep them busy all the time, and the hours, filled with their fears, passed slowly. The crew on the "Santa Maria" talked in whispers of forcing the admiral to turn around and go back. They even spoke of throwing him overboard if he refused.

Late in the afternoon of September 25, Captain Martin Pinzon cried, "Land! I see land!"

Like magic the word swept the ships. They all saw it — a long strip of land at the farther edge of the sea. As the sun set, some of the sailors claimed they could see hills, and buildings with spires. The men shouted and sang for joy. Columbus dropped to his knees and prayed.

"It is Cathay! Cathay at last!" the sailors cried. "Our admiral was right!"

Darkness fell suddenly. Many of the men watched through the night, hoping to be the first to see land at dawn.

But in the morning light there was no land. There was not a sign of land anywhere. Had it been a bank of dark clouds edged by the rays of the setting sun? Or had it been a mirage? Whatever it was, it was a sad disappointment for every one of them.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

• LAND AT LAST! •

After that disappointment, the men growled and grumbled more than ever. Their faces grew sullen and they cast sly glances at Columbus. They gathered in small groups, muttering and talking in low tones.

"Oh, my admiral! Master! Please take care." Pedro crept to Columbus' side as he stood looking down at the water. "Some of the men are so angry they mean to harm you. Keep in your cabin away from them, I pray you."

"Do not worry, lad," the admiral replied calmly. "Their feelings will soon change."

Captain Martin Pinzon came over in a

small boat from the "Pinta" and urged the admiral to change the course of the ships to southwest by west. Pinzon was sure that they would reach land sooner if they sailed in that direction than if they sailed straight west. That evening Columbus did shift his course a little, not exactly as Pinzon had asked, but to slightly south of due west.

They sailed on for days and still they saw no land. Then Captain Pinzon of the "Pinta" came again. This time he brought his brother, Captain Vicente Yanez Pinzon, commander of the "Nina."

"Admiral, we are here to entreat you," the Pinzon brothers said earnestly, "to order us to turn around and sail back to Spain. The 'Santa Maria' also. Our men will go no farther."

Columbus was silent. He paced up and down the small cabin. Then he turned to them and said, "Give me three more days. Only

three days. If no land be found within those three days," he promised, "we shall all return to Spain."

"We thank you for your promise," the Pinzon captains said. "We shall try our best to keep our crews under control for three more days."

The admiral called his sailors together. He promised them, as he had promised his captains, that if land were not discovered within three days he would turn back.

That put a stop to the sailors' complaints. Their spirits were brightened, too, by finding in the water things which must have floated from the shore, wherever that was. There were some green rushes, a piece of carved wood, and a long branch. This had on it fresh green leaves and flowers that were like the wild roses which grew in Spain. It was clear that this rose branch had been in the water only a short time.

Everyone grew more excited as the day of October eleven passed. After the evening meal Columbus talked to his men.

"We all owe our thanks to God," the admiral said, for bringing us safely on this long voyage. Let us thank him for guiding us over strange seas and giving us only fair weather. Then let each man keep a close watch for land all through the night. We will not anchor, but will sail straight on through the hours of darkness to find the land that awaits us."

The men repeated the evening prayer and sang the "Salve Regina," the hymn of praise to the Queen of Heaven. They seemed happier than since they had left Palos. Everyone wanted to be the first to see land with the coming of dawn. Not a soul on any ship slept that night.

Columbus changed the course from westerly south by west back to west, but he said nothing about it to anyone. About ten o'clock,

before the moon had risen, he saw off in the distance a faint light, like the gleam of a candle. He called two of his trusted men to look at it. One man said he could see a light, but the other man could not. It soon faded out of Columbus' sight too.

In the early morning of October 12, Rodrigo de Triana, a lookout on the "Pinta," cried, *"Tierra! Tierra!"* (Land! Land!) Captain Martin Pinzon on the "Pinta" also saw the land. He ordered the signal gun fired. The three vessels came close together. The men joined in singing a hymn. Then they danced about the decks, cheering and shouting from one boat to another.

On the flagship some of the men knelt before their admiral and kissed his hands. Columbus, grateful and happy, cried, "We have reached the Indies! My dream of a waterway to the East has come true."

CHAPTER TWELVE

• A STRANGE LAND •

There was nothing to do but wait for the morning light to show the land ahead. The admiral ordered the captains to drop their anchors, not too close to the shore. This was for fear of hidden reefs.

Daylight on this twelfth of October, 1492, showed that land was about six miles away. As the little fleet sailed nearer, the men saw that they were coming to an island, rather low and flat. The ships sailed around the southern end of it. They took care to keep well away from the reef of white coral which bordered the shoreline. Sighting an opening in the rocks, the "Santa Maria" led the way

through it. There the vessels anchored in the bright, blue waters of a bay, near a beach of sparkling, snowy, coral sand. Dark forms of people could be seen, peering out from behind the rocks and trees which edged the beach. But no one came out into the open.

The small boats were quickly lowered. The officers stepped into them.

Columbus was the first to step ashore. He carried the royal banner of Spain and wore his silvery armor. Over his shoulders was thrown his admiral's cape of gold-embroidered, scarlet velvet. From the top of his snowy white head to the tip of his polished boots, he looked every inch the "Admiral, and Viceroy, and Governor."

The officers of the ships, too, were dressed in their finest clothes. Captains Martin Pinzon and Vicente Pinzon followed Columbus. Each carried a banner especially made for this voyage of discovery. The banners were white

with a green cross in the center; the letter "F" appeared on one side of the cross and "Y" on the other, for Ferdinand and Ysabella. Above each letter were embroidered their majesties' royal crowns.

Columbus knelt and kissed the sand. Then, weeping, he prayed aloud, giving thanks to God. The officers and their men followed Columbus' example. They too knelt, kissed the ground, and prayed. Then the admiral, with his officers standing beside him, took formal possession of the new land.

"I take possession of this island, which I name San Salvador, and of all the islands and lands about it, in the name of my patron and sovereign lady, Isabella, and her Kingdom of Castile."

And now the natives who had been hiding

behind trees and rocks came up to the white men. They came in the friendliest manner. These natives were light brown in color, and were rather tall. They had straight, coarse, black hair and large eyes. They stroked the Spaniards' clothes and their beards. These were of especial interest to them!

Columbus urged his men to be kind to these natives. He called them Indians, as he believed that he had landed on an island of India. From their gestures Columbus knew that these people had never before seen white men. Later he learned that they thought he and his men were messengers from heaven, who had flown down to earth in their "winged canoes." While they could not understand the language of the Spaniards, the natives quickly caught their meaning through signs.

The admiral had brought a chest of trinkets from the "Santa Maria." The Indians liked the little red caps, the strings of glass beads,

and the tiny bells. In exchange, they gave the Spaniards parrots, skeins of cotton thread, wooden darts, and their gold nose ornaments.

Columbus and his men explored the island. They found it large, flat, and sandy, and covered with beautiful hardwood trees and lush grasses. But although the island was pleasant, it was a great disappointment to Columbus and his men. They had expected to find beautiful large cities filled with richly clothed people. Instead, there were only naked men and women, living in crude huts thatched with palm leaves.

These people raised corn and yams. They made cassava bread from the yucca plants which grew there. They also raised cotton, which they spun and wove into thread. From this thread they wove the hammocks in which they slept. The Spaniards had never seen hammocks before. They found them very pleasant and useful, especially on their ships.

Columbus wrote a long report, describing this first landing. In it he said that the gentle, friendly Indians would make good servants. He wrote that he planned to take some of them back to Spain to show the king and queen. The natives were so quick to learn, he wrote, that they could be easily taught the customs of the church, as the queen had wished.

After a few days the fleet sailed away from San Salvador. With the Spaniards on the "Santa Maria," unwillingly, went six Indians. Columbus called them guides. He hoped to train them to learn Spanish and, in turn, to have them teach his men to understand the native language.

Columbus felt that he must go on with his search for Cipango and Cathay. He knew from the reports of travelers and seamen, as well as from Marco Polo's book, that spices, jewels, and gold were in those lands. And

those things he must find, especially the gold, to take back to the king and queen of Spain. He must also deliver the letters which his king and queen had given him for the Emperor of Cathay, the Grand Khan.

The three little ships cruised for days among the many islands near San Salvador, but Columbus found none of the treasures he was looking for. They discovered the island of Cuba, which the admiral decided must be Cathay. He sent Luis de Torres, the man who could speak many languages, to find the palace of the Emperor of Cathay and gave de Torres the letter from Ferdinand and Isabella to deliver to the Khan.

Luis de Torres failed to find the Grand Khan. Columbus had told de Torres that he would find paved streets lined with great palaces, for this is what he had read in Marco Polo's story. Instead, de Torres and his men had to chop a path through the jungle. Deep

in the forest they found not palaces, nor a royal court, but about fifty small huts. There were no noblemen wearing jewel-trimmed robes, but there were several hundred naked Indians.

The natives were all friendly. They took their visitors to their chief's house. There, as a special honor, they were seated in chairs of fancifully carved wood. They were entertained with the best of everything the Indians had. The women and children of the tribe came in awe and were allowed to kiss the hands and feet of the "men from heaven."

On the next day the Spaniards started back to the ships. The whole tribe wanted to go with them, but Luis invited only the chief and his son. Columbus received the visitors kindly and took them aboard to show them his ship and to treat them to some Spanish food. But the failure to find the court of China was a great disappointment to Columbus.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

• SHIPWRECK •

The natives had many dogs of a queer breed. These dogs were unable to bark, but made a sort of grunting sound. The Indians used them for food, but this did not appeal to the Spaniards.

Not a bit of gold did Columbus or his men find in Cuba. Nor did they find the pearls they had hoped to get.

So Columbus decided to sail on to Cipango. There, surely, he believed, he would find the precious metal. Even if he could not discover the court of Cathay, he would take back gold to Spain.

From the beginning of the voyage, Colum-

bus had tried to keep the three ships close together. But before Columbus started for the other island, Captain Martin Pinzon steered the "Pinta" away from the fleet. He and his men were striking out to find gold for themselves.

At first the admiral was worried over the disappearance of the "Pinta." He was afraid that she might have been blown off the course. But soon he realized that Captain Pinzon and his crew had willfully deserted him. This hurt Columbus and made him angry.

The two ships which were left — the "Santa Maria" and the "Nina" — set sail for Haiti. This was the island which Columbus thought must be Cipango. He was afraid that Captain Pinzon might sail the "Pinta" there and find gold before the other two ships arrived. But no one saw a sign of Captain Pinzon or the "Pinta."

The Spaniards found Haiti the most beautiful of all the islands which they had seen. The green mountains and lovely flowers made them all think of Spain, so Columbus named the island *La Isla Espanola* — Hispaniola. He raised a great wooden cross on the cape off Moustique Bay and declared the island to be a possession of Spain.

The natives of this island, too, were kind. They came to the ships, bringing gifts of cassava bread, fruit, and fish.

Columbus explored the small islands near Hispaniola. He visited Guacanagari, a friendly chief who ruled over a large part of northwest Haiti, or Hispaniola. The admiral and his men promised to spend Christmas Day with this chief and his people.

But on Christmas Eve something happened that changed all Columbus' plans. Columbus had gone to his cabin to get some rest. Juan de la Cosa, the officer on watch, left the

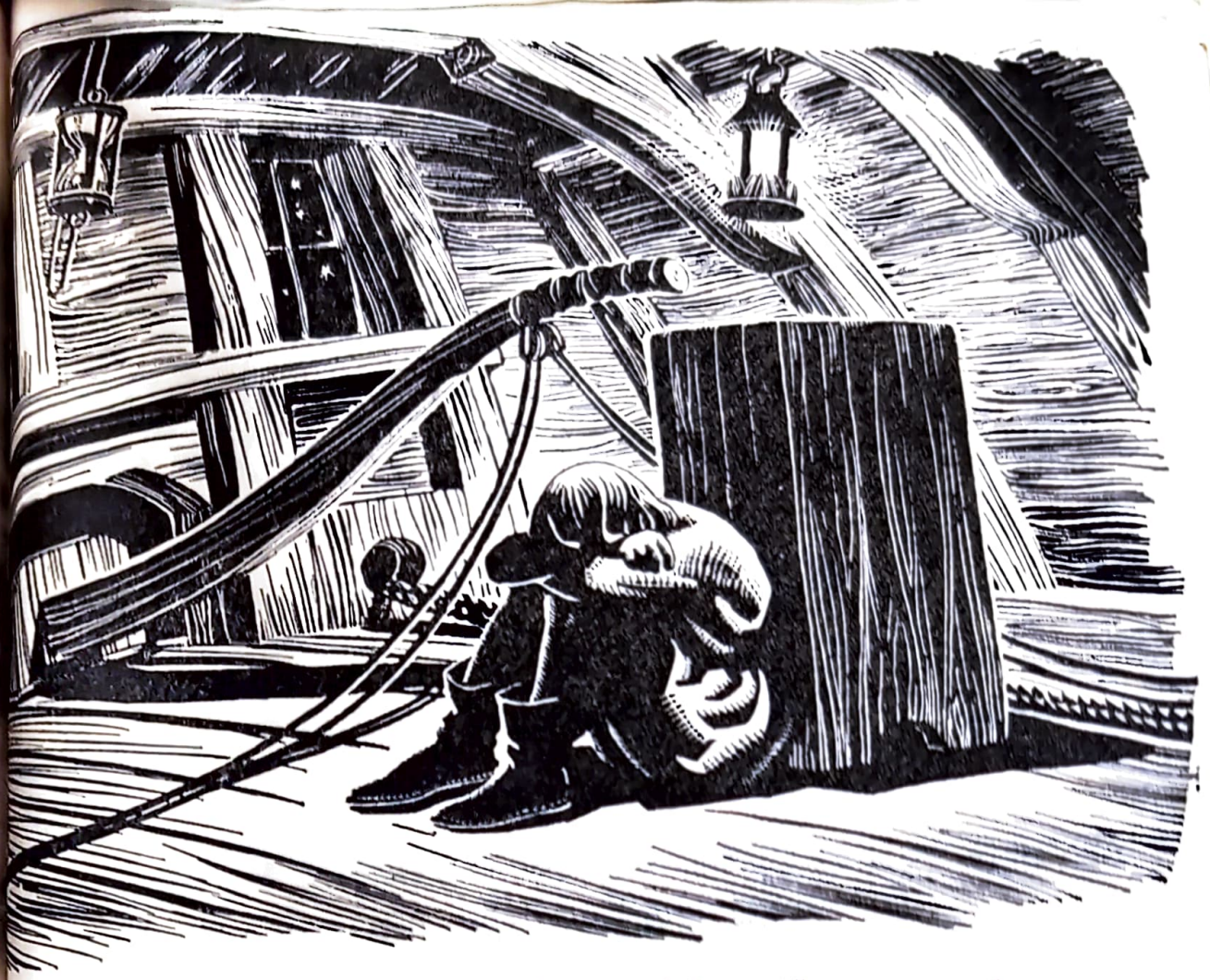
steersman in charge and went to his bunk for a nap. It was a calm night. Everything was quiet and still. After a time, the steersman felt sleepy too. He called to the ship's boy, who was sitting near the large box which held the compass.

"Boy, do you want to steer while I sleep?"

"That I do, sir," replied the lad eagerly.

"Just watch the compass and keep the ship in line with it." And the steersman lay down to sleep, though he well knew he was disobeying strict orders.

At first the boy was thrilled to guide the ship. But soon he grew drowsy. Before he knew what was happening, the vessel had slowly slid upon a low, hidden coral reef. When he found he could not move the rudder, the frightened boy called for help. Columbus was the first to appear. He took command, calling the full crew on deck to help. But every wave washed the ship farther up on the rocks.



She was swept over on her side, the wooden hull was splintered, and the water poured in. The admiral and his men had to get into the small boats and go aboard the "Nina." This was now the only ship left of the brave little fleet. And this was Christmas morning!

When daylight came Columbus sent for his friend Guacanagari.

The chief wept with the admiral over the wreck of the "Santa Maria." With the help of the natives and their long canoes, everything on the ship was saved. A place was made for the admiral on the "Nina." Guacanagari gave the sailors two large native shelters on the shore.

When he learned the Spaniards were hunting for gold, Guacanagari said he would take them to Cibao. He promised that there they would find all the gold they could carry away. When the chief spoke of Cibao, he meant the mountain of Cibao on the island of Hispaniola. But Columbus thought the word Cibao was the native word for Cipango (Japan). That was the land which he believed contained the greatest riches and treasures. Now at last he felt sure that he would find the place he had been seeking!

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

• STORMS •

Columbus wondered how he could manage when he was ready to sail back across the Ocean Sea. How could the forty men from the wrecked ship find a place in the little "Nina"? She was crowded with her own twenty-two. But soon this problem was settled. When they learned that gold was within their reach, many of the Spanish sailors came to the admiral. They begged him to let them stay at Hispaniola and dig the precious metal.

Columbus decided to build on the beach a fort and quarters for the men. There the Spaniards could live while they collected gold for themselves and a supply to send back to

Spain. The
protect them.

Columbus would sail back in the "Nina" to make his report to his king and queen. Then he would return across the western sea with more men, ships, and supplies.

With the help of Chief Guacanagari's men, the planks and beams were brought ashore from the wrecked "Santa Maria." In ten days the fort was completed. Columbus named it *La Navidad,* because the ship was wrecked on Christmas — Nativity Day. Forty men from the "Santa Maria" and the "Nina" offered to stay at La Navidad. Columbus put the fort in charge of some of his best men. He also left the supplies and provisions saved from the "Santa Maria."

Before he sailed, Columbus invited Chief Guacanagari to a dinner aboard the "Nina." He gave the chief some presents, including a shirt and a pair of gloves. Then the native

the shore in honor
come very good friends. Guacanagari bade
his officers. They had all be-
the admiral a loving farewell and gave him
some parting gifts.

Columbus made a farewell speech to his men who were staying at La Navidad. "Remember your God," he urged them. "Obey your leaders. Do no harm to the Indians. Remember that your success will depend wholly upon your own actions."

On January 4, 1493, the little "Nina" set out for Spain. The vessel was crowded with the extra men from the "Santa Maria" and the ten Indians Columbus was taking back to Spain.

After they had sailed for two days the men saw a ship coming toward them. It was the "Pinta"! The vessel came close, and Captain Pinzon boarded the "Nina." He greeted Columbus in a friendly way and tried to excuse

his absence. He claimed that heavy winds had blown the "Pinta" off her course and swept her away from the fleet.

The admiral welcomed Pinzon and seemed to accept his excuses. He said nothing about his running away. Columbus felt that Captain Pinzon was not to be trusted, yet he thought it safer for the two ships to travel together.

For a month there was pleasant weather. Then the vessels sailed into a raging hurricane. Lightning, winds, and waves were terrific. In the midst of the storm, the "Pinta" once again disappeared from view.

As the storm continued, the Spaniards on the little "Nina" became panic-stricken. Even the admiral admitted that he was afraid. As for the ten homesick, seasick Indians, they were almost dead from fright.

Admiral and crew prayed to be saved from death. They promised that if they lived they would do penances and go on pilgrimages to

show their thanks. When the storm grew still more violent, they prayed even more. They vowed that if they ever reached land they would march together, dressed as penitents, to give thanks in the first church they found.

Columbus was afraid that the ship might go down. If it did, it would take with it the records of his voyage. Then the knowledge of his discoveries would be lost forever. So he went to his cabin and sat down to copy his story on parchment. The table rose and fell before him with the violence of the storm, and he could scarcely control his pen. But at last he came to the final page. Carefully he wrapped the pile of parchment in a waxed cloth. He put it in a small wooden barrel, sealed the barrel tightly, and threw it overboard. As he tossed it into the foaming waves, Columbus prayed that whoever found it would take it to the king and queen of Spain.

The "Nina" came through that storm. But

the weather was not peaceful long when a second tempest struck her. When the second storm ended, the vessel was near land. Columbus knew that this land was Santa Maria, one of the Azore Islands belonging to the Portuguese. He put out small boats, and half the crew went to shore. They were going to fulfill the vows they had made during the hurricane. Columbus and the rest of the men would go when the first group returned.

The sailors, dressed as penitents, barefoot and in their shirts, went to a small church near the landing. They knelt at the altar, offering prayers of thanksgiving. Suddenly the governor and townspeople burst into the church. They seized the Spanish sailors and popped them into prison.

Columbus and his men on board the ship waited for several hours. They wondered what had happened to their comrades. Then the governor and a boatload of Portuguese rowed

out to the "Nina." Columbus learned that the governor had had orders from the Portuguese king to capture him. The Portuguese King John believed that Columbus had laid claim for Spain to lands that explorers from Portugal had discovered earlier.

Columbus refused to leave the ship. He showed his letters and papers from the Spanish rulers. He said that he had done nothing for which he could be arrested. The king and queen of Spain would have a good deal to say to the Portuguese rulers if he were taken prisoner! And he demanded that his sailors be released from jail at once.

At first the Portuguese governor refused to do this. But Columbus was firm. He kept on demanding that his men be brought back to his ship.

It took a week to untangle this affair. At last the Spaniards were again on the "Nina," and she was sailing toward home.

A few days later the little vessel sailed right into the center of a cyclone. This was the wildest, fiercest storm yet. The sails were torn to shreds; only one was left.

Columbus showed superb skill as a captain. He guided the little ship with one ragged sail through the storm, into peaceful waters, and up the River Tagus. There he anchored near Lisbon. To his surprise, he was invited to visit King John. This fickle king entertained the admiral like a royal guest, fairly heaping favors on him.

When Columbus went back to his vessel the king sent a company of noblemen to escort him. He even offered to send a special troop of guards to accompany him across Portugal to Spain. But Columbus chose to return to Palos aboard the "Nina."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

• SAFE HOME •

On March 15, 1493, about noon, Columbus brought the "Nina" back to her home port. She had left it just thirty-two weeks before. Some boatmen spied the little ship sailing up the Tinto River toward the harbor of Palos.

"The 'Nina' is here!" they cried. "Look, everyone, the 'Nina' is here!"

Men, women, and children ran out of their houses and down the streets, shouting the news. "The 'Nina' is home again! She has come back safe and sound!"

Soon everyone in Palos was waiting at the harbor. Men crowded into small boats and

rowed out to meet the returning vessel. Amid the ringing of church bells and the cheers and cries of the people, the "Nina" cast her anchor. The sailors jumped into little boats and rowed ashore. Their wives and children met them with glad cries. But many women wept when they failed to see their husbands or sons.

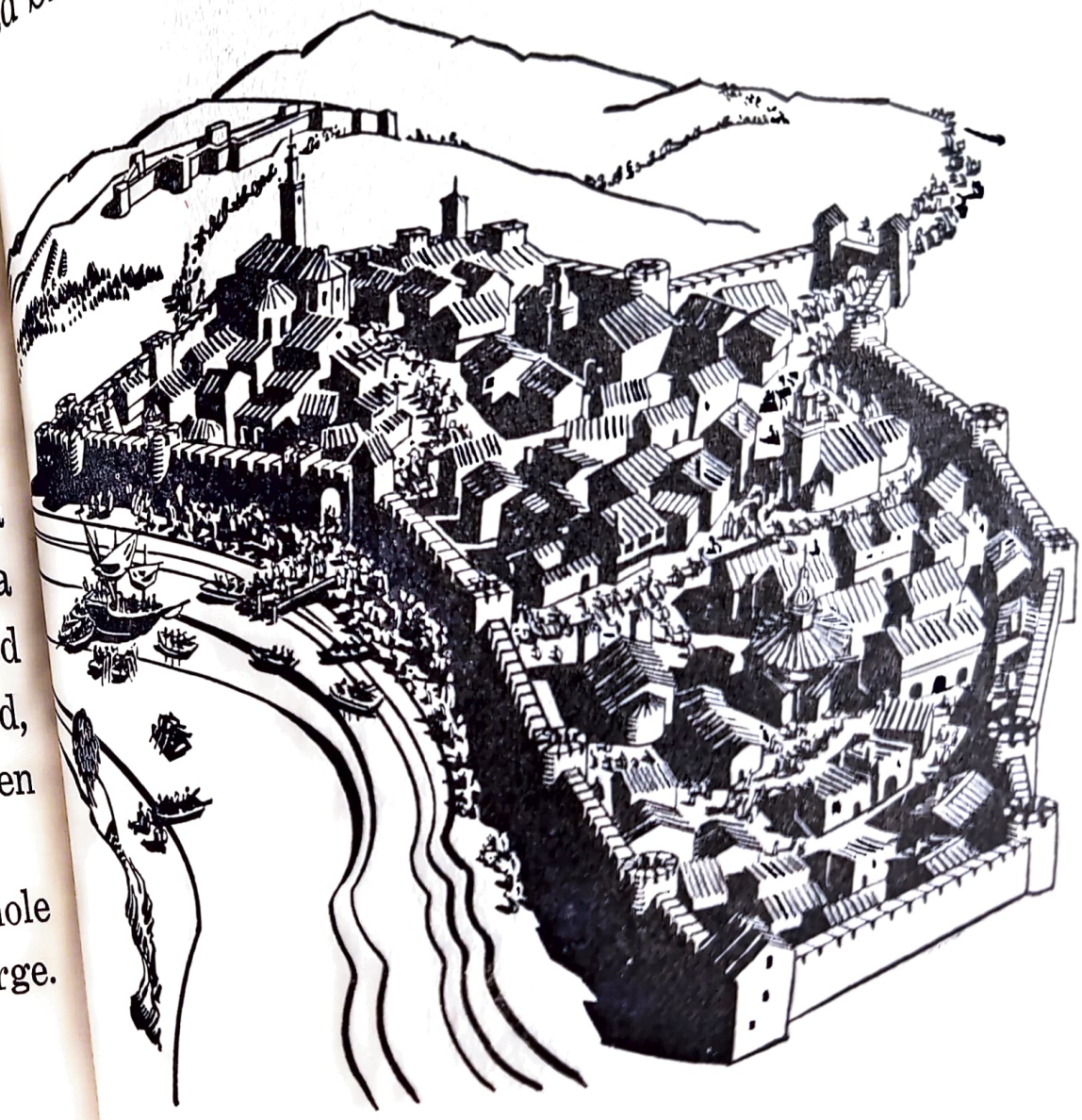
"Where are the others? Where are the 'Santa Maria' and the 'Pinta'," they asked.

Then the admiral spoke to the townspeople. He explained that the "Pinta" had been swept from its course during the heavy storm. He told them about the wreck of the "Santa Maria" and about the building of Fort Navidad. He mentioned the gold they had found in the new land. Many men, he said, were staying there to dig gold. "Those men will return later," he promised.

The admiral, the officers, and the crew went to the church of Saint G

here they fulfilled the vows they had tried
o fulfill on the Portuguese Island. A *Te*
Deum was sung in Columbus' honor.

The people from all the country around
flocked to Palos. Father Perez hurried from
La Rabida. Hundreds came to stare in wonder
at the curious things Columbus and his men
had brought from the far-off land across the



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Ocean Sea. They gathered around the sailors to hear about their adventures on the long voyage. But more than anything else they were interested in the queer-looking natives. Columbus took the ten weary, confused Indians to La Rabida with Father Perez.

That same evening the "Pinta" arrived Captain Martin Alonzo Pinzon had reache the Spanish coast near Vigo, about five hun dred miles north of Palos, several days b fore. And again he was disloyal to Columbu He sent a messenger to King Ferdinand a Queen Isabella. He asked that he be allow to present the news of the voyage to th majesties.

But Ferdinand and Isabella were loya Columbus. They sent a very cool repl Captain Pinzon. They said that they prefe to hear the report of the discoveries Admiral Columbus himself. So there nothing left for Pinzon to do but to

home to Palos. He hoped that Columbus might not have arrived, or that perhaps the "Nina" had been shipwrecked.

To his disgust, the first thing which met his gaze was the "Nina," snugly nestled in the harbor. And to add to his annoyance, the whole town was filled with people whooping and hurrahing in celebration of the return of the admiral and the crew of the "Nina."

The sailors on the "Nina" had spread the story of Captain Pinzon's disloyalty. The Palos people did not like that. Columbus was their hero, and they paid no attention to the return of the "Pinta" or to its Captain Martin Pinzon. Tired from the long, hard voyage, Captain Pinzon did not even report to the admiral this time. He went to his home. There the man, who really was ill, died a few days later.

As soon as he landed in Palos, Columbus sent a letter to King Ferdinand and Queen

at the royal court to give them a full report of his voyages and discoveries. He asked that their reply be sent to him at Seville.

Columbus paid a short visit to Father Juan Perez and his other good friends at La Rabida. Then he gathered his crew together in Palos, and they traveled on to Seville.

The letter from Ferdinand and Isabella soon reached him. To Columbus' delight, it was addressed to "Don Cristobal Colon (the Spanish version of his name), Our Admiral of the Ocean Sea, Viceroy, and Governor of the Islands that he hath discovered in the Indies." It contained a warm, friendly welcome, and commanded Columbus to come at once to Barcelona. There he was to give his report of his voyage of discovery. And the king and queen added that they wished him to return as soon as possible to the new lands which he had found.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

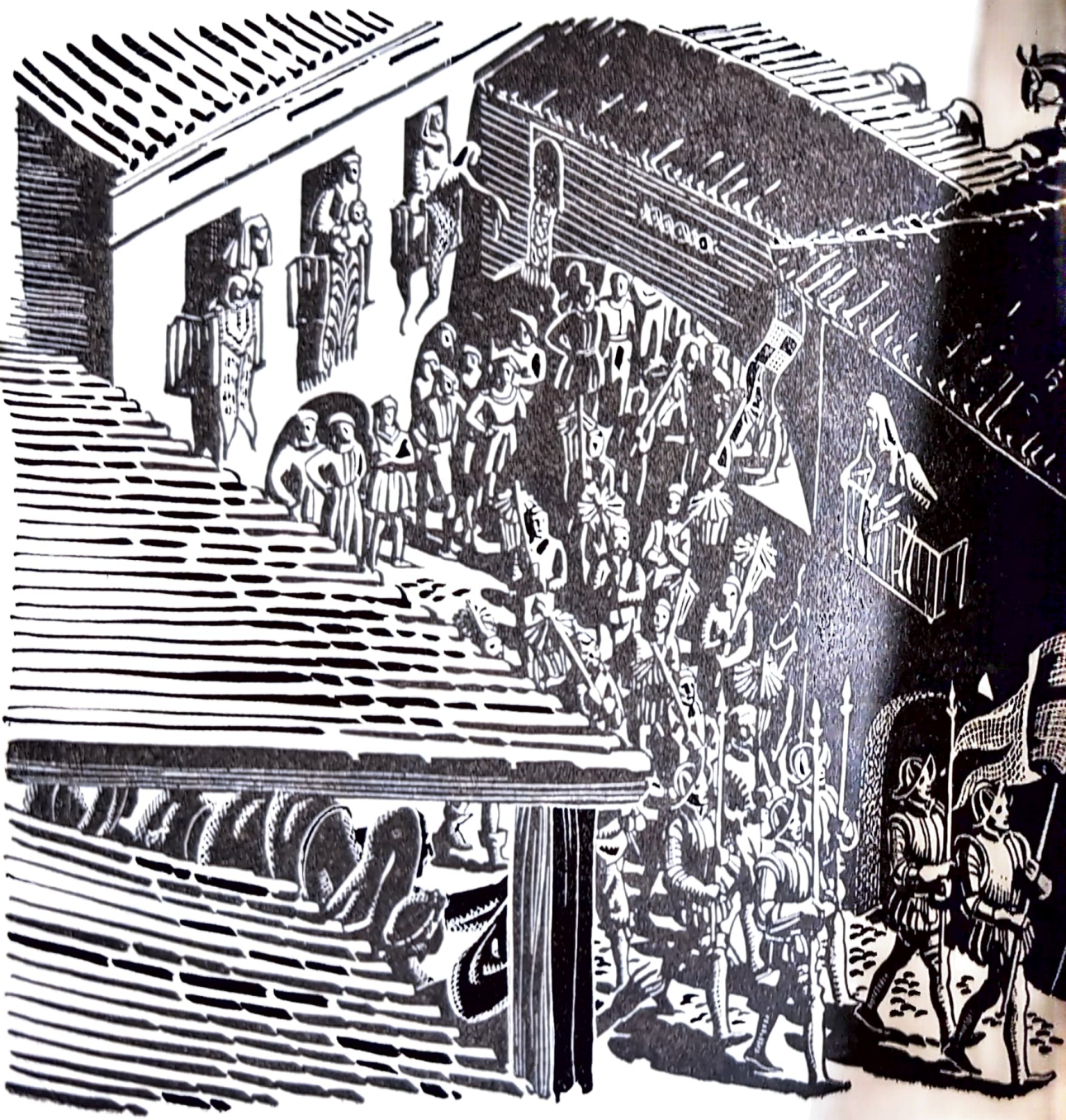
THE ADMIRAL'S TRIUMPH

Very soon Columbus and his men started on the long, hard journey to Barcelona. On horses, mules, and in mule-drawn wagons and carts, they made their way slowly over the eight hundred miles of crude, rough roads. All along the way people gathered to see the great admiral and the strange things which he had brought from those new lands far across the sea of darkness. Somewhere in the journey across Spain Columbus' son, Diego, joined him.

Soon after the middle of April, 1493, Columbus and his weary men arrived at Barcelona. A company of soldiers, a large band

of musicians, and a great number of noblemen met the admiral and his party outside the city.

The way to the court was gaily decorated. Flags, banners, and colorful rugs hung from the windows of the houses along the line of



march. A grand parade had been arranged.

First came the soldiers; then thirty or more tanned sailors, each man carrying a brilliantly colored parrot or some other noisy tropical bird in a large cage. Other sailors carried little animals — the ratlike hutias and the small lizards so plentiful in the new land. Two sailors led large iguanos. Then came mules with baskets of beautiful shells and stones hung on either side, across their

backs. Other mules carried bales of cotton in the same way. The ten Indians rode horseback. They were miserable and uncomfortable; they had never before even seen a horse, much less ridden one. These men who had gone naked about their native forests were dressed in fancy clothing and decked out with many heavy ornaments of gold on their heads and arms.

Columbus, Diego, and the officers of the "Nina," dressed in their finest clothes, were mounted on horses whose harnesses were decorated with bright feathers and gay tassels and trimmings of dyed cotton. Columbus wore his new uniform of a Spanish admiral. Its gold-embroidered, scarlet velvet cape swung from his broad shoulders.

When the party reached the palace, the admiral and his men were received with great ceremony. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella sat on a glittering throne beneath a

canopy of cloth of gold. A great company of knights, noblemen, and ladies of the court were present. With his white head held high, Christopher Columbus advanced to the throne. There he knelt before the king and queen and kissed their hands. Ferdinand and Isabella rose, held out their hands to Columbus and bade him sit beside them and tell them of his adventures.

This was the high spot in Columbus' whole life. Never again did he have such a feeling of pride and triumph as at that moment. His royal audience — Ferdinand and Isabella and Prince Don Juan — listened eagerly to his story of the voyage and the discoveries of new lands. They examined with pleasure the unusual gifts he had brought them. The people of the court crowded close to the throne, eager to hear and see this famous man.

When Columbus had ended his story, the king and queen bestowed on him much praise

and many honors. King, queen, and prince knelt before the throne and gave thanks to God. Then together they all went into the royal chapel. There the great choir, accompanied by an orchestra, chanted the *Te Deum*. Tears of gratitude and happiness filled the eyes of the king and queen, and of Columbus.

After this service the admiral was escorted by the royal guard to a fine residence. The king and queen had provided this for him during his stay in Barcelona. And they gave to Columbus an honor which was shared by no other person: when the king and his son rode out in their great carriage, Columbus was invited to ride between Ferdinand and young Prince Juan.

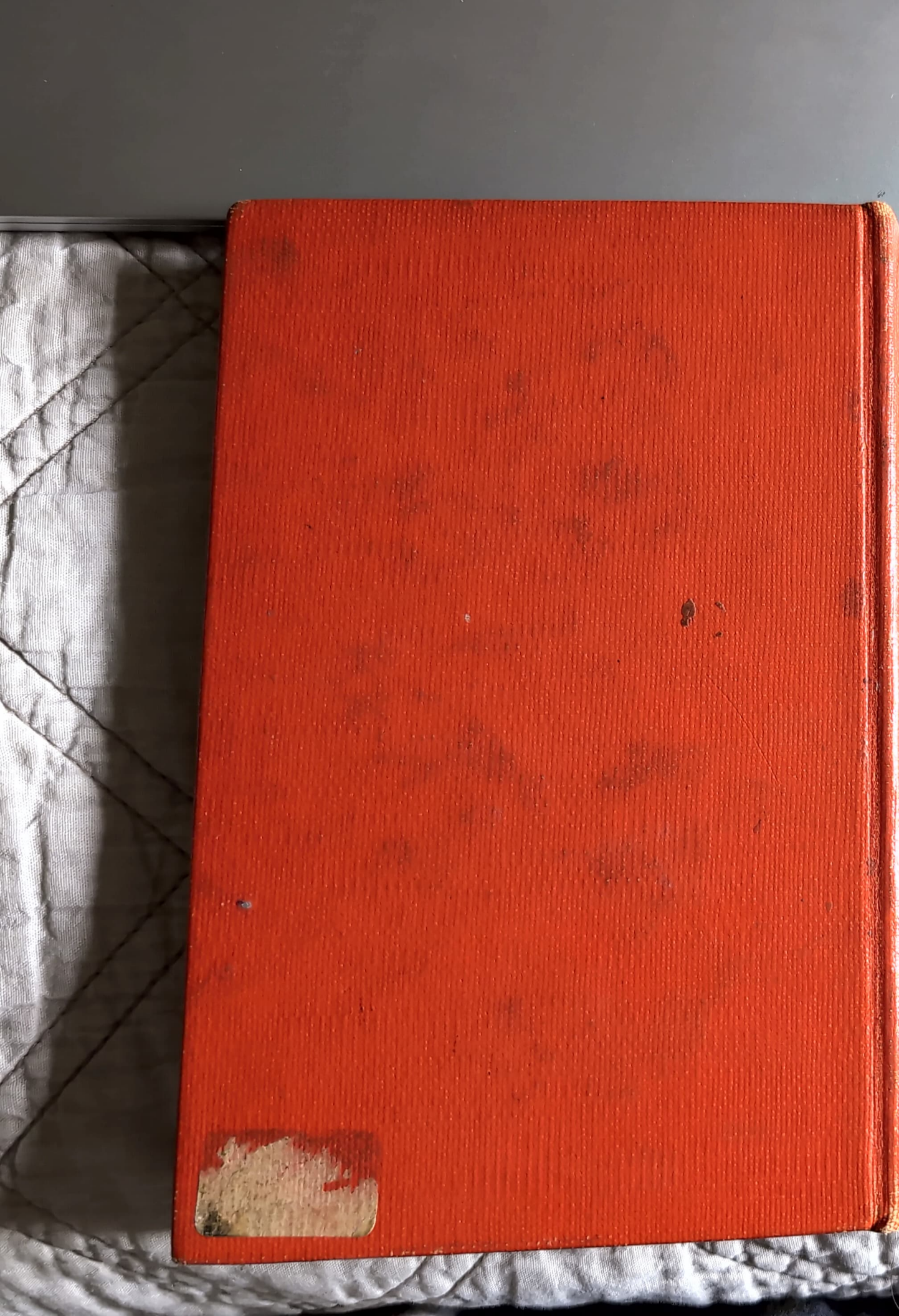
Columbus became a popular hero. People in the streets stopped and turned to gaze in admiration at the tall, handsomely dressed man. No more did children laugh at him, pointing to their foreheads in ridicule and

calling him "crazy." Instead, they crowded about him, eager to be near the great man.

All the requests that Columbus made before he sailed were granted. The king and queen gave him the office of admiral; they made him a nobleman and gave him a coat of arms. In the upper half of this shield was a gold castle on a green field, and a purple lion with a green tongue on a white field. In the lower half were gold islands in a silver sea and five anchors in a blue background. Columbus little guessed that after nearly five hundred years this coat of arms would still be used by his descendants!

Everyone at the court of Spain, and later all over Europe, knew that Columbus had made a wonderful discovery. They knew that he had found for Spain lands no other country had discovered. But no one knew just what or where these lands were.

Later Columbus made three other voyages

across the Ocean Sea. These voyages were full of adventure. They were full of sadness too.

Christopher Columbus did much for Spain and for the whole world. But as long as he lived, this brave, earnest, persistent man believed that he had discovered and traveled a waterway to parts of India, China, and Japan. Columbus never knew that he had found a new world — the land of the West — America.